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1963/08/28

FE:RHilsman:mk
(Drafting Office and Officer)

VIETNAM, WHITE HOUSE

BOX NO: 4/6

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: August 28, 1963
6:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Viet-Nam

PARTICIPANTS:

White House
The President
McGeorge Bundy
Mr. Forrestal

Defense Department
Secretary of Defense McNamara
Deputy Secretary Gilpatric
Gen. Maxwell Taylor
Major Gen. Victor Krulak

COPIES TO:

State Department
Secretary of State
Governor Harriman
Assistant Secretary Hilsman
Ambassador Nolting

CIA
General Carter, Deputy Director
Richard Helms, Deputy Director for Plans

Justice: Attorney General Kennedy
USIA: Mr. Edward Murrow
Treasury: Secretary Dillon
The Vice President

The meeting was delayed because of the preceding civil rights meeting. The President asked the Secretaryoof State and the Secretary of Defense, Mac Bundy and General Talyor to meet with him privately in another room.

Upon their return the President announced that three messages would be sent to Saigon--one from General Taylor to General Harkins asking him for his personal assessment of the situation and the plans of the generals; The second is a personal message from the President to Lodge saying that the President wanted to be assured that there was full coordination between Saigon and Washington; that he wanted Ambassador Lodge's personal and frank assessment; that he wanted to avoid any situation in which the field was going ahead on a plan that was against their better judgment because they thought it was orders from Washington and that Washington was issuing instructions on the false assumption that the field agreed; the third cable is the general cable drafted by McNamara, Harriman, Bundy, Forrestal and Hilsman following this morning's meeting.

The meeting broke up with Mr. Harriman's saying, "Mr. President, I was very puzzled by the cable from General Harkins until I read the outgoing from General Taylor." (The President had some difficulty containing himself until everyone had left the room, whereupon he burst into laughter and said, "Averell Harriman is one sharp cookie."

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